



VICE PRESIDENT'S UPDATE



Dear colleagues,

I was pleased to announce earlier this fall that in FY 2021, we reached yet another institutional milestone: record-breaking, external sponsored funding of **\$363 million**. This is a jump of more than 8% over the previous year, and a leap of 34% over the last three academic years. I fully expect that our research enterprise will be fueled by the OVPRI's recently announced One VCU Research [internal funding opportunities](#).

[Register for tomorrow's webinar](#) on the funding applications hosted by the [One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan](#) Advisory Council co-chairpersons, Michael Donnenberg, M.D., Ph.D., School of Medicine, and Kathleen Rudasill, Ph.D., School of Education.

I thank the VCU Institute for Contemporary Art for hosting a live streamed conversation between **President Michael Rao, Ph.D.**, and myself on the future of One VCU Research. If you missed the live event, [watch the video](#) on how the university's new strategic research plan embraces VCU's history in the humanities and arts with its advancement in science, health sciences and engineering.

Have an enjoyable and relaxing winter break.

-P. Srirama Rao, Ph.D.

**New One VCU SRPP
research funds**

Learn about new research funding opportunities in support of the One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan: VCU Accelerate Fund, VCU Breakthroughs Fund and an expanded VCU Quest Fund.

**Accelerate
Fund**

**Breakthroughs
Fund**

**Quest
Fund**

News from around the OVPRI

Sanjur (Sandy) L. Brooks, Ph.D., joins VCU as the new director of [the Human Research Protection Program](#). Brooks received her doctorate in bioethics from Albany Medical College and has served in various positions in the Department of Veterans Affairs, including acting director of National Compliance Policy and Chief of Ethics Policy. Please join us in

welcoming her to VCU and in thanking **Susan Robb**, senior associate vice president for research compliance, for her service as interim director.

Commercialization expert and entrepreneur **Gerard Eldering joins VCU Innovation Gateway** as director of New Ventures, building a foundation for VCU's inventors to turn research into revenue-generating companies. Eldering, founder of startup foundry InnovateTech Ventures, is a member of Innovation Gateway's Commercialization Fund board and CEO of Perfusion Medical, a company in the university portfolio.



Sandy Brooks, Ph.D. *Gerard Eldering*

To mitigate the risk of undue foreign influence at VCU, the Global Affairs subcommittee, a subcommittee of the **Compliance Advisory Committee**, has implemented the **International Visitor pre-screen form**. It must be filled out by the host prior to the visit and requires approval from the department chair. The form can be filled out online. Please contact **Nicole Porter**, VCU's export compliance officer, (727) 219-3715, with any questions.

If you missed the recent training by HRPP on VCU's new data management plan requirement, check out the HRPP **blog** for information. The requirement applies to all studies submitted on or after Nov. 1, 2021. The blog provides an overview of how to create a data management plan using the data management system. It also includes a link to a video tour of the DMS created by Technology Services.

The RAMS Forum returns early in 2022 with a mini-forum session focused on the initiatives in the **One VCU Research Strategic Priorities Plan**. The Research Administration & Management Symposium Forum, co-sponsored by the Legal, Audit, and Compliance Job Family and the Research Job Family, offers presentations covering research-related topics through full day sessions or virtual meetings. More details will be shared and posted to the **OVPRI events calendar**.



Check out Innovation Gateway's **latest newsletter**, which highlights innovations originating from the university.

"An amazing place" opens for research

The recently celebrated new \$7 million, 14,000-square-foot **research building** in Charles City County will strengthen the Rice Rivers Center's mission to enhance society's ability to manage large river systems more effectively. **Greg Garman, Ph.D.**, director of the center, says, "It's going to be this amazing place for the cross fertilization of ideas and knowledge and methods."



Help recruiting rural study participants

The Wright Center for Clinical and Translational Research offers a new funding program aimed at helping researchers recruit study participants in rural areas. The [Rural Pilots Voucher Program](#) offers VCU researchers the opportunity to offset costs related to innovative digital health methods for participant engagement and recruitment in hard-to-reach patient populations, including those in rural areas and patient groups who are historically underrepresented in clinical research.

A robotic cane improves wayfinding

A [news release](#) from the National Institutes of Health promoted research led by VCU's **Cang Ye, Ph.D.**, professor of computer science at the College of Engineering. Ye and colleagues are developing a robotic cane that could offer blind and visually impaired users a new way to navigate indoors. The team recently published new details on their improvements to the cane's ability to perform in large indoor spaces. The NIH's National Eye Institute and the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering Development are co-funding institutions.



Doctoral student Lingqiu Jin tests the robotic cane.

Indian embassy delegation visit spurs possibilities for collaboration

In late October, [delegates from the Indian embassy](#) in Washington visited our campuses to hear about VCU from university leadership, faculty and students, including **President Rao**; **Provost Fotis Sotiropoulos, Ph.D.**; **College of Engineering Dean Barbara Boyan, Ph.D.**; **Matt Conrad, vice president for government and external relations**; **Jill Blondin, Ph.D., executive director and senior international officer of the VCU Global Education office**; and **VPRI Sriram Rao, Ph.D.** The visit may someday open new doors for educational exchanges and partnerships between VCU students, faculty and staff and their counterparts abroad.



Humanities Research Center launches Native writer/artist residency program

VCU's Humanities Research Center launched a [Native writer/artist residency program](#) honoring the legacy of Karenne Wood, a member of the Monacan Indian tribe and a poet, activist, tribal historian and educator who lectured at VCU. Cristina Stanciu, Ph.D., the center's director, said the residency aims to enhance the visibility of Virginia Indigenous cultures and communities and to be more intentional and reciprocal in promoting cultural exchanges between the university and the local Native communities. The residency program is supported by the OVPRI and the VCU Foundation.

Lasting health effects of exclusion and segregation

[A report](#) from the Northern Virginia Health Foundation and VCU's Center on Society and Health provides a "backstory" to a 2017 study documenting a 17-year gap in life expectancy in the region. **Steven Woolf, M.D.**, led a team in recounting the long history of exclusion and segregation in Northern Virginia, which harmed the health of residents of some communities and concentrated wealth and opportunity for others.



Identifying callous-unemotional traits in children

VCUArts illustrator and game artist **Jason Bennett** is collaborating with **Nicholas Thomson, Ph.D.**, a forensic psychologist and professor in the Department of Surgery. Together, they are developing [a virtual-reality game and data-tracking program](#) that focuses on the roles of fear and fearlessness among youth with callous-unemotional traits, which makes them more likely to engage in chronic criminal behavior and develop mental health problems into adulthood.

VCU's 2021 STAT "wunderkind"



Arnethea Sutton, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Health Behavior and Policy at Massey Cancer Center, is having a banner year. In January, she received a prestigious NIH K99 grant, which she is using to study health disparities in breast cancer in the emerging field of cardio-oncology. Then she was tapped to speak with first lady Jill Biden about cancer disparities when Biden toured the center the following month. Now, she's been **declared a "wunderkind,"** one of the 27 "most impressive doctors and researchers on the cusp of launching their careers" by the news site **STAT**, well-known for its coverage of health, medicine and scientific discovery. She is the first from VCU to win this honor.

VCU research highlights

Earlier this fall, OVPRI and VCU Public Affairs collaborated on a package of stories to highlight the breadth of VCU research. [An overview of the series](#) showcases the diversity of innovation and discovery among our colleagues.

Enjoy the stories below featuring just [some of VCU's innovative and creative researchers](#):

- [New lecture series will provide a forum to explore the significance of research for social impact](#)
- [To persuade college students to practice social distancing, scaring them into action isn't enough](#)
- [Improving outcomes for children with significant disabilities](#)
- [CDC grant to address youth violence in Richmond and beyond](#)
- [Grant will focus on understanding and combating racial inequities in lung cancer](#)
- [New funding to support research on increasing access to and outcomes of organ transplants](#)
- [Examining impacts of e-cigarette flavor regulations on African American menthol smokers](#)
- [School of Nursing joins NIH-funded national study on long-term effects of COVID-19 in children](#)

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